

Mr. KENNEDY. How much time do I have?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 4 minutes 38 seconds.

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield 2 minutes to the Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, Senator ENZI says this debate is grating on the Republican side of the aisle. Sorry, that is how it is when you are on the wrong side of the truth. It is grating to have to hear the truth as Senator KENNEDY and others have spoken of.

It has been 9 long years since there has been an increase in the minimum wage. It is a disgrace. While we see our friends on the other side fight for the CEOs of oil companies, in the Committee on Commerce, they would not even swear them in. They are all on that side. When it comes to working families, forget about it.

Then Senator ENZI implies this does not have anything to do with women. Women make up 59 percent of the workers who would be affected as a result of raising the minimum wage; 1.4 million working mothers would benefit directly, 760,000 single moms would get an immediate raise, and over 3 million kids have parents who would get an immediate raise.

What has happened to family values on the other side of the aisle? It seems to me it is just so many empty words.

Then they scare you and say the economy will suffer. All you have to do, again, is look at the facts and look at the truth. In the 4 years after the last minimum wage increase passed, the economy experienced its strongest growth in over three decades. All the talk about how bad a minimum wage increase is for the economy is not true.

I say to my Republican friends, support the Kennedy increase in the minimum wage. The truth shall set you free.

I reserve the remainder of my time.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I yield myself 4 additional minutes.

The Senator from Massachusetts has said: Let's have an up-or-down vote. There are a lot of things around here that we talk about having an up-or-down vote on. We have not been able to have up-or-down votes, and it is always because there are some other amendments that might make the bill better. Sometimes they are even germane to the bill we are talking about.

The one we are talking about, the amendment we are putting this on now is Department of Defense. Yes, you can make some arguments about how this is defense related, I guess, but what we would normally do, if we were serious on an issue such as this, is bring it up as a separate issue and allow amendments to it. But that is not going to happen because there are a few things in my bill that the other side of the aisle would not like to have.

One of those is flextime. They show that chart where the person could make 50 hours this one week and get overtime and then make 30 hours in the next week. That is not how the real

world works either. They would earn 40 hours in one week, which would not be overtime, and 40 hours in the next week, which would not be overtime. That is still the same 80 hours. With the agreement of the person asking for the flextime, they could put the 50 hours in one week, the 30 hours in the other week, have the extra day to do whatever they want with their kids.

If flextime is a bad idea, why did we let the Federal employees do it? The problem in my State is with the person who works for a private industry in Wyoming who is married to someone who works for the Federal Government because the Federal Government lets them do the flextime that the Senator from Massachusetts says steals overtime. If it stole overtime, does anyone think our Federal employees would be interested in it? No; they have other values.

When we did flextime for the Federal Government, Senator KENNEDY voted to ensure that the Federal employees would have access to flextime, to have the scheduling options necessary to balance work and family life. Senator KENNEDY, along with 11 other Democrats, cosponsored the Nickles bill that extended flextime and comp time to State and local employees. If it is a bad idea, why would they do it for Federal employees and State and local employees? And why don't we do it for the private employees? The argument is, nasty employers would never let them have the time.

That is a terrible rap for business. Small business understands the needs of their people better than big business because they work with them every day, they go to church with them every weekend, they are in civic organizations with them, their kids go to the same schools, and they are the ones who have to deliver the bad news that they are not going to be allowed to do that flextime, and they cannot afford to do it a different way.

Sometimes the employees in small business make more than the employers in small business. Those are some of the CEOs whom I am worried about, the ones who have to wake up in the middle of the night and say, How am I going to make payroll this week? I would like to be paying my people more, but I don't know how I am going to pay them at all.

That is a reality in small business. I know small businessmen across the country who are hearing me say that are saying: He's got it. He understands our problem. What can you do to help us?

So we put together some provisions that in a normal situation we would be able to debate one of those at a time and decide on some of them and reject some of them. That is how it ought to work. But it is not just as simple as saying we can get everybody and all the kids out of poverty if we were just to raise the minimum wage.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and reserve the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, as I understand, I have 2 minutes 50 seconds left.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, there are going to be two votes, and the first vote will be on my increase in the minimum wage; am I correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, in just about 5 minutes from now the Senate will have an opportunity to make a judgment as to whether we are going to offer a helping hand to some 15 million Americans who are at the lower end of the economic ladder who are earning the minimum wage and just above.

These workers are men and women of dignity. They take pride in their work. They are overwhelmingly women. If you care, this is a women's issue, having an increase in the minimum wage. It is a children's issue because a great majority of the women have children.

So many of these mothers look in the eyes of their child, and they wonder if they are going to be able to feed that child. They are worried whether that child is \$80 sick, when they hear that child cry in the night because they know they have to pay \$80 to go to an emergency room.

They know they cannot afford a birthday present for their child, to be able to go to a neighbor's house, to be able to enjoy the things every child who is a son or a daughter of a Member of Congress can enjoy.

That is what is happening out across America. It is a women's issue, a children's issue; it is a civil rights issue because so many of those workers are men and women of color. It is a family issue. It is a values issue. Don't talk to us on the other side of the aisle about family values. This is it.

This is an issue of decency and fairness. Americans understand decency. Americans understand fairness. Americans understand that if you work hard, 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year, you should not live in poverty. And that is what is happening. Nine years they have waited. Nine years they have waited—but not the Members of the U.S. Senate.

Mr. President, \$30,000 we have increased our salary, and in 9 years we have refused to provide an increase for the men and women who are working on the lowest rung of the economic ladder. That is obscene.

We have a right to alter that and change that now when the roll is called. Let's say that we stand for those workers who are working hard, trying to make a difference for their families, playing by the rules. I hear from my friend from Wyoming they should not be on the Defense authorization bill. How many soldiers who are over there fighting in Iraq, mothers or fathers, might have been earning the minimum wage? What are they fighting for? They are fighting for American values.